

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LUSAKA 02724 081705Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07 MCE-00

AID-05 /083 W

-----015864 081719Z /53

O P 081615Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6518

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY

UEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 3301

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 2724

DEPT PLEASE PASS AMERICAN EMBASSY MOSCOW

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV PINS ZA RH UR

SUBJ: REASONS BEHIND THE CURFEW

REF: LUSAKA 2708

1. IN THE ABSENCE OF OFFICIAL EXPLANATION OF THE EXTENSION OF THE BLACKOUT AND CURFEW IN LUSAKA AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES, (REFTEL) RUMORS AND SPECULATION REGARDING THE REASONS BEHIND THE MOVE HAVE BEEN RIFE. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF TROOP MOVEMENTS IN SEVERAL AREAS AS WELL AS REPORTS OF TRUCK CONVOYS. IN ADDITION, A RELIABLE DIPLOMATIC SOURCE WAS TOLD BY AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER AT LUSAKA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT THAT ON THE NIGHTS OF SEPTEMBER 6 AND 7 A NUMBER OF AEROFLOT PLANES ARRIVED AND OFF-LOADED MILITARY SUPPLIES AND BLACK TROOPS.

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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 02724 081705Z

2. THE ZAMBIA DAILY MAIL'S EDITORIAL OF SEPTEMBER 8 ATTACKED "RUMOR-MONGERS," INDICATING SOME GOVERNMENT CONCERN ABOUT STORIES WHICH ARE CIRCULATING. REFERRING TO "UNDILUTED NONSENSE" AND "RUBBISH" BEING SPREAD BY SOME, INCLUDING "OBVIOUSLY PAID AGENTS OF THE ENELY," THE PAPER IMPLIED THAT ACTION WILL BE TAKEN TO SILENCE "IRRESPONSIBLE SPECULATION." PROMINENT COVERAGE WAS ALSO

GIVEN TO AN INTERVIEW WITH A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WHO SAID THAT THE PARTY WAS GOING TO DEAL WITH THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION TO ENGAGE IN RUMOR MONGERING.

3. MANY OBSERVERS STILL FEEL THAT THE BLACKOUT AND CURFEW WERE CALLED MAINLY TO EMPHASIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE THREAT TO ZAMBIA AT A TIME WHEN THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IS SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN AND THE GENERAL POPULATION IS SHOWING LITTLE INTEREST IN ON-GOING PARTY ELECTIONS. IN ADDITION, IT MAY HAVE HELPED TO DRAMATIZE ZAMBIA'S POSITION AS A FRONTLINE STATE DURING THE VISIT OF NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO, FROM WHOM ZAMBIA MAY WISH TO GET MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

4. COMMENT: DOMESTIC CONCERNS AND OBASANJO'S VISIT PROBABLY HAVE SOME VALIDITY AS REASONS FOR THE BLACKOUT AND CURFEW BUT TO US DO NOT SEEM SUFFICIENT IN THEMSELVES. AS TO THE REPORTED AEROFLOT FLIGHTS, IF THEY OCCURRED IT WOULD SEEM MOST LIKELY THAT THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN DELIVERING ZAPU TROOPS FROM EITHER THE SOVIET UNION OR ANGOLAN TRAINING SITES. A POSSIBLY MORE LOGIC EXPLANATION FOR THE BLACKOUT AND CURFEW MAY BE TIED TO CONTINUING REPORTS THAT ZAPU MAY BE PLANNING MORE AGGRESSIVE ACTION AGAINST RHODESIA FROM ZAMBIAN TERRITORY AND WITH ZAMBIAN SUPPORT IN THE FORM OF COVER FIRE. IF SUCH IS THE CASE, OFFICIALS HERE MAY EXPECT INCREASING RETALIATION FROM ACROSS THE BORDER. BY PREPARING FOR SUCH POSSIBILITIES, IF ATTACKS DO OCCUR ZAMBIA'S LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO BE WISE AND PRUDENT IN CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 LUSAKA 02724 081705Z

TAKING APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURES.
LOW

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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TAGS: PDEV, PINS, ZA, RH, UR
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